



Charter School Annual Site Visit Report
Charter Schools Accountability and Support
2011-2012

**ST. HOPE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT**

MARCH 2012

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

St. Hope Leadership Academy Charter School (St. Hope) is a middle school serving approximately 278 students from fifth through eighth grade in the 2011-12 school year.¹ The school is in the fourth year of its first charter term and, if approved for renewal, plans to continue serving grades 5 through 8 during its next charter term and eventually to expand to serve high school grades.² St. Hope is currently co-located in an NYC DOE building in District 5. The school's student body includes 84.8% students eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch, 8.3% English Language Learners, and 15.5% special education students.³

The school currently has 297 students on its waitlist.⁴ The average attendance rate for school year 2011-12 was 95%.⁵ The school has had one leader, Ventura Rodriguez, since its founding.

St. Hope received a B on its NYC DOE school Progress Report in 2009-10 and a C in 2010-11, receiving a D in Progress, a C in Performance and a B in Environment.⁶ The school's scores on the NYC DOE School Survey in 2010-11 were below average on each category (Academic Expectations, Communication, Engagement, Safety and Respect), with 74% of parents, 86% of teachers, and 97% of students participating.⁷ The school is currently in good standing with state and federal accountability measures.⁸

St. Hope Leadership Academy Charter School is an independent charter school that is no longer associated with the St. Hope Public Schools charter management organization (CMO); however, the school has retained "St. Hope" as part of its name.

Annual Review Process Overview:

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) office of Charter Schools Accountability and Support (CSAS) conducts an annual site visit of charter schools authorized by the NYC DOE. The site visit is designed to address three primary questions: is the school an academic success; is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization; and is the school in compliance with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations? To ascertain matters of sustainability and strategic planning, we also ask about the school's plans for its next charter term. The visits are conducted by representatives of CSAS and last the duration of one school day. The annual site visit begins with a meeting with the school leadership team. Afterward, the reviewers visit classrooms and hold brief meetings with available administrators and teachers. Areas of evaluation include, but are not limited to: academic goals and mission; curriculum and instruction; school culture and learning environment; assessment utilization; parent engagement; government structures and organizational design; community support; special populations; and safety and security. The site visit is intended to provide a snapshot of the school and reflects what was observed at the time of the visit.

The following experts participated in the review of this school on March 13, 2012:

- Gabrielle Mosquera, Director of Oversight, NYC DOE CSAS
- Jessica Fredston-Hermann, Analyst, NYC DOE CSAS
- Simeon Stolzberg, Consultant to NYC DOE CSAS

¹ Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (3/2/12)

² Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Self-Evaluation Form (March 2012)

³ NYC DOE ATS system, April 2012; the school's self-reported numbers (3/2/12) are similar to those from the ATS system pull with regard to students eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (84%; 234 out of 278 and English Language Learners (8%; 21 out of 278), but vary with regard to special education students (19%; 53 out of 278), although this number includes both students with IEPs and students with 504 plans.

⁴ Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (3/2/12)

⁵ Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (3/2/12)

⁶ NYC DOE Progress Report webpage: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm>

⁷ NYC DOE website: http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/2010-11/Survey_2011_M388.pdf

⁸ New York State Education Department - www.nysed.gov

Part 2: Findings

Areas of Strength:

- The school has established a warm and respectful climate conducive to learning.
 - The school has focused attention this year on increasing the consistency of behavioral expectations, classroom management, and discipline procedures. Professional development has been devoted to building common language and protocols to enhance school culture. The school pillars, expectations for behavior, and escalating consequences for misbehavior were clearly posted throughout the school.
 - Teachers used clear and explicit classroom procedures, including common signals to gain attention or put down pencils and track speakers. Additionally, the school has implemented formal transition plans for each floor. Most students appeared to have internalized these expectations and were well-behaved, polite, and respectful during observed classes and class transitions.
 - The school has implemented a “paycheck” system to help students recognize and reflect on their behavior. Points associated with key values are tracked. Students earn points that can be used for a variety of rewards, including lunch with teachers and field trips, and regular paychecks are sent to parents to inform them about their child’s behavior. On the day of the visit teachers were observed awarding and deducting points to reinforce expectations. According to staffers, the system has contributed to a significant decrease in student suspensions from this time last year, from approximately 44 students suspended in March 2011 to 19 students suspended in March 2012. Additionally, a full 50 percent of total suspensions at this point in the year are repeat offenses by 8 percent of students, according to the school’s estimates.
 - Faculty and administration share responsibility for meeting and greeting students in the morning and monitoring students in public spaces.

- The school has devoted a range of resources to meeting the needs of at-risk students.
 - The school implemented integrated co-teaching (ICT) in each grade along with SETTS push-in and pull-out supports for students with disabilities.
 - Co-teaching is used throughout the school to provide opportunities for targeted small group instruction for all students. On the day of the visit, multiple adults were observed in most core classrooms.
 - According to school leadership, the support services team was enhanced this year with new staffers, weekly meetings between support and content staff, and co-teaching support from the NYC Charter School Center. Learning specialists work with some students to preview material in order to prepare them to participate in their regular classrooms.
 - The school provides a number of interventions for struggling students, including tutoring, Saturday school, and the computer-based Achievement 3000 program. Teachers recently introduced afterschool office hours to help students.

- The school has worked to improve its professional culture for teachers and administrators and has devoted a range of resources to improving instructional and leadership skills.
 - The school’s leadership team has been reorganized and expanded to include three assistant principals and a literacy coach. Each member of the leadership team is assigned to supervise a small number of teachers, allowing them to provide targeted support and guidance. Teachers interviewed stated that the new structure is a “huge help” and felt attention was more focused on meeting their individual needs.
 - External consultants have been brought in to assist the school’s leadership team with its own development with assistance with a particular focus on enhancing instructional leadership skills.

- The school has created and implemented a rubric defining expectations for instructional practice; teachers were instrumental in its development and those interviewed reported substantial buy-in. Domains included in the rubric include planning and preparation, classroom management, delivery of instruction, assessment, family outreach, and professional responsibilities.
 - School leaders recognized clear strengths and areas for improvement during classroom observations.
 - Students are released early on Wednesday to provide staff with the opportunity for weekly professional development. The school utilizes its own staff and well as external consultants to provide teachers with an array of training, including Teacher's College Writing Workshop and No-Nonsense Nurturing sessions.
 - The schedule has been designed to support regular grade team and subject area meetings, which are used for analyzing student data and planning purposes. Support staffers also participate in these meetings to coordinate interventions for struggling students and provide general education teachers with strategies for supporting their at-risk students. In addition, a morning half-hour "zero period," carved out for teachers before students start their day, provides additional time for teachers to plan and collaborate.
 - The principal has foregone a private office to allow for a student resource room and teacher work room. Staffers interviewed reported that the latter has enhanced staff collaboration.
- The school regularly administers useful assessments and is developing its capacity to use results to drive instructional and programmatic decision-making.
 - Through the use of frequent reading level tests, interim assessments and "dress rehearsals" for state exams, administrators and teachers have identified specific areas of need. For example, based on analysis of performance data they have focused instruction on developing their students' writing and listening skills. In one observed classroom, a teacher modeled an assignment on making connections between texts by reading out loud rather than presenting a sample paragraph and asking students to identify themes and evidence.
 - Though there was limited evidence in observed classrooms on the day of the visit, both school leaders and teachers interviewed reported using formative and interim assessment data to establish flexible small groups within classes in order to target specific skills and re-teach topics based on need. For instance, they noted the use of Do Now tasks and Exit Passes to identify students struggling to master specific skills and form groups to address these deficits in subsequent lessons. In one observed English class the lesson began with a quick review of the use of "their, they're, and there" based on the teacher's observation of confusion in student work.
 - Documents provided evidence of data analysis, including disaggregation of interim assessment results by grade and class, trends over time, and "power standards." Dress rehearsal results are shared with the board.
 - According to an NYC DOE ATS data pull in April 2012, St. Hope Leadership Academy serves a comparable percentage of at-risk students to its CSD of location.
 - The percentage of students at St. Hope who are eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch is 84.8% compared to the district's 78.4%.
 - The percentage of students with IEPs or an ELL designation is close to district averages; the school student population is 15.5% special education students and 8.3% ELLs compared to the district's 16.7% special education students and 10.9% ELLs.⁹

⁹ NYC DOE ATS system, April 2012; the school's self-reported numbers (3/2/12) are similar to those from the ATS system pull with regard to students eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (84%; 234 out of 278 and English Language Learners (8%; 21 out of 278), but vary with regard to special education students (19%; 53 out of 278), although this number includes both students with IEPs and students with 504 plans.

Areas of Growth:

- The school should continue to raise the consistency, quality and rigor of instruction in all of its classrooms. Its academic results on the NYS assessment were below CSD 5 at all four grade levels in ELA and two of four grades in Math.
 - A focus for professional development has been “100%” on encouraging teachers to hold all students accountable for learning. In some classes students were uniformly engaged in the learning activity, a large percentage volunteered to answer questions, and connections were made across the subjects, as exemplified by a student who addressed a question in a social studies class with a quote studied in an English class. Teachers in these classrooms effectively used a range of techniques to engage students, including cold calling, eliciting deeper answers, turn and talk, and students helping other students to answer questions. However, in other classes some students had their heads down, were not paying attention or appeared bored or disengaged. In one class students were asked to “turn and talk” with a partner, but some students had no partners and did not participate in the activity. In a number of classes students finished assignments and then sat at their desks doing nothing while the teacher worked with other students. The school should continue to focus professional development and coaching on reaching its goal of 100% accountability for learning with continued attention to classroom management lesson, planning, and effective instructional strategies.
 - Some teachers challenged students with higher order questioning techniques, such as asking them to explain their answers and make connections across texts or to personal experience. Some lesson objectives also focused on “pushing big ideas,” such as thematic comparison across texts. However, in a number of classes the questioning was low level and focused on basic recall or procedural steps. Students in some classes also spent a great deal of time copying from the board, which minimized their opportunities to grapple with actual text and concepts in a meaningful way. The school should continue to focus on developing the rigor of questions, assignments and assessments to ensure students master grade-level content and skills and ensure learning time is maximized in each classroom.
 - Though noted as a priority by school leaders, differentiated materials, pacing and instruction were observed in only a few classrooms. In one observed math class, a group of students worked independently on a packet, a learning specialist worked with three students, while the rest of the class participated in a discussion with the general education teacher about a math problem on the board. However, most observed classes were primarily whole-class instruction. The school should continue to develop teachers’ skills at differentiating instruction and make sure adequate materials are available that meet all students’ needs.
- The school reported that it has made substantive changes to its academic programs and will continue refining them based on the needs of students.
 - The school has worked to improve its literacy program, hiring a new literacy coach and working with a Teacher’s College consultant. Professional development has focused on literacy instruction and the school has added to its leveled libraries and increased student access to non-fiction texts. While these changes appear to be based on student needs, some friction was reported among interviewed faculty and instructional leaders as they balance expectations and implementation. School leaders should continue to monitor and evaluate program implementation to ensure a cohesive program emerges and ensure it has a positive impact on student learning.
- The school has devoted substantial resources to teacher support and development, and should develop a more systematic approach to observation and feedback.
 - While teachers reported clear lines of accountability, not all reported receiving consistent observation and feedback. Teachers were not all clear about the protocols for observation, indicated feedback was not always structured, and noted a lack of follow-up. One teacher noted systematic use of the school’s teaching rubric to set goals, which

informed support throughout the year, while another felt observation was sporadic and disjointed. Based on interview, more coordinated support appears to be targeted to novice teachers, such as ongoing assistance with lesson planning and modeling of instruction. School leadership should continue to work with the teacher evaluation rubric as a tool that can support all teachers in improving their craft and support the school in meeting its academic goals.

- While the school has explicit priorities and strategies guiding its work, it should also focus on clear and measurable goals.
 - Both school leaders and teachers are aware of the need to raise student performance and the importance of state test results in school accountability. Nevertheless, there was little mention of quantifiable benchmarks or targets that would allow the staff and board to measure progress and evaluate the efficacy of its programs. For example, while reading levels are assessed and tracked, there was no mention of targets for students or subgroups. The school should articulate clear goals and regularly measure progress to drive improvement efforts.
 - Staff described using item analysis and disaggregation to identify students and skills in need of re-teaching and interventions, but did not mention protocols to follow up and measure progress. They appreciated data tools such as Edusoft, but it is not clear these tools are being maximized. The school should continue professional development for teachers in the use of data, including school-wide accountability metrics as well as student and class results.



Part 3: Essential Questions and Accountability Framework

The CSAS Accountability Framework

To help NYC DOE authorized charter schools better understand what we mean by success for charter schools, the NYC DOE's Charter Schools Accountability and Support team (CSAS) has developed an Accountability Framework build around four essential questions for charter school renewal:

1. Is the school an academic success?
2. Is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization?
3. Is the school compliant with its charter and all applicable law and regulations?
4. What are the school's plans for its next charter term?

1. Is the School an Academic Success?

1a. High Academic Attainment and Improvement

Schools that are academic successes have many of the characteristics below:

- Meet absolute performance goals established in school charter
- Meet student progress goals established in school charter
- Are closing the achievement gap for at risk students, including special needs and ELL students
- Are surpassing performance of DOE identified peer-schools
- Are surpassing performance district and city proficiency or better averages
- Are meeting other rigorous academic and non-academic goals as stated in school's charter

Evidence for success might include, but not be limited to, the following depending on school configurations:

- Grades 3-8 NYS ELA Results (absolute performance, individual student progress, comparative performance to similar schools, home district or city averages, progress for at-risk populations)
- Grades 3-8 NYS Math Results (absolute performance, individual student progress, comparative performance to similar schools, home district or city averages, progress for at-risk populations)
- Grades 4 and 8 NYS Science Results (absolute performance, individual student progress, comparative performance to similar schools, home district or city averages, progress for at-risk populations)
- Grades 8-12 NYS Regent Exam Results
- When applicable, NYSAA or other approved alternate assessments results
- HS 4- and 6-Year Graduation Rates (absolute and progress, overall, for at-risk student populations)
- Grades 8-12 College Readiness Credit Accumulation
- Percentage of Students Applying to and Being Admitted to College
- Percentage of Students Taking AP Courses and/or Percentage of Students Passing AP Courses
- Results on state accountability measures
- Charter School Academic and Non-Academic Goals
- NYC Progress Reports

1b. Mission and Academic Goals

Schools with successful missions and goals have many of the characteristics below:

- Have an animating mission statement that staff, students and community embrace
- Set ambitious academic and non-academic goals that entire school community knows and embraces
- Have processes for regular monitoring and reporting on progress toward school goals
- Have processes for adjusting strategies in support of goals as appropriate in response to monitoring

data

Evidence for successful missions and goals might include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Mission statement, charter, external documents (parent and family handbooks, school website, etc.)
- Annual reports, school improvement plans, leadership board reports
- Board agendas and minutes
- Parent, student, and teacher satisfaction surveys
- Parent association meeting agendas and minutes
- Participation at parent-teacher conferences, school advocacy events, participation in academic goal related programs
- Stakeholder (board, parents, staff, students, etc.) interviews

1c. Responsive Education Program

Schools with successful education programs have many of the characteristics below:

- Are self-reflective and examine practice based on outcomes against goals
- Have well-thought out curricular programs that are aligned with NYS learning outcomes as described by state standards and the new Common Core Curriculum.
- Use instructional models and resources consistent with school mission and that are flexible in addressing the needs of all learners
- Offer defined opportunities for remediation and acceleration
- Have effective strategies and quality instructional programs for addressing students with special needs and ELLs
- Have defined strategies that they can measure and monitor for closing the achievement gap
- Implement a coherent and effective interim assessment system (e.g., use of formative, interim, and summative assessment data) for monitoring progress, predicting performance, and adjusting instruction
- Have an effective process for supporting improved classroom instruction, including frequent observation and feedback
- Use a defined process for evaluating curricular tasks, programs and resources for effectiveness and fit with school mission and goals
- Have school calendars and day schedules that provide the time necessary to deliver on the school's mission and academic goals

Evidence for successful education programs, in addition to positive results, may include, but not be limited to, many of the following:

- Instructional planning documents (alignments, scope and sequences, curriculum maps, unit and lesson plans, etc)
- Student/teacher schedules
- Classroom observations
- Student Intervention / Response to Intervention program description and resources
- Special Education/ELL progress monitoring documentation
- Interim assessment results
- Student and teacher portfolios
- Data findings; adjusted lesson plans
- Self-assessment documentation
- Professional development plans and resources
- School calendar and daily schedules
- DOE School Surveys and internal school satisfaction surveys
- Instructional leader and staff interviews

1d. Learning Environment

Schools with successful learning environments have many of the characteristics below:

- Have a strong academic culture that creates high academic and behavioral expectations in a way that motivates students to consistently give their best efforts
- Use a comprehensive approach to student management, including positive behavioral expectations and a clear discipline policy to build and sustain a safe, orderly, and supportive classroom environment
- Provide for safe, respectful, efficient transitions, hallways, cafeteria, yard, etc.
- Have classrooms where academic risk-taking and student participation is encouraged and supported
- Provide opportunities for students to actively engage in their own learning and in the life of the school
- Have a plan with formal or informal structures or programs in place that provide students opportunities to develop as individuals and citizens (for example: a character education, citizenship, or community involvement or service program)

Evidence for successful learning environments may include, but not be limited to, many of the following:

- School mission and articulated values
- School calendar and class schedules
- Student management plan (code of conduct, school values, discipline policy, positive incentive system, etc.)
- Student attendance and retention rates
- Student discipline data (referral, suspension, expulsion)
- DOE School Survey student results
- DOE School Survey parent and teacher safety and respect results
- Parent complaint/concern information
- Internal satisfaction survey results
- Leadership, staff, and, if appropriate, student interviews
- Classroom observations
- Scheduled student engagement opportunities (e.g., student advisory, internships, student government, student led conferences, peer tutoring, peer mediation, etc.)

2. Is the School a Fiscally Sound, Viable Organization?

2a. Governance Structure and Organizational Design

Schools with successful governance and organizational design structures have many of the characteristics below:

- Have a clearly articulated governance structure, compliant with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations, with clear lines of accountability for the Board, school leadership and all staff
- Have a capable Board of Trustees with appropriate officers, committees, and a purposeful blend of skills and experiences to provide oversight and strategic direction to fulfill the mission and goals of its charter
- Have a Board that is fully compliant with all applicable laws and regulations, particularly but not limited to open-meeting laws and conflict of interest regulations, and is fully compliant with its Board approved by-laws (number of meetings, quorum, posting of calendar, agenda and minutes)
- Have a defined process for Board reflection on effectiveness, assessing developing needs, and plan

for professional growth

- Have developed a succession plan for board and school leadership, consistent with the charter and Board by-laws, to ensure continuity of direction and leadership over time and despite circumstance
- Implements a school leadership structure that is aligned with charter and that is sufficient to fulfill school's mission and achieve its accountability goals and, if and when necessary, makes timely adjustments to that structure with proper notice to and approval by its authorizer
- If applicable, school relationship with a charter management organization is identified in charter and supported by a management agreement that spells out services, responsibilities, accountability reporting, performance expectations, and fees
- Have timely and appropriate access to legal counsel
- Implements a process for recruiting, hiring, compensating, monitoring, and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's staff that is clearly defined in staff handbook
- Have instructional leadership staffing and support structures that holds staff accountable for student learning outcomes and provide regular feedback on instruction to teachers, including both formal and informal observations

Evidence for school governance and organizational design may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- School charter
- Board by-laws, roster, trustee resumes, calendar of meetings, meeting agenda and minutes
- Annual conflict of interest forms
- Board resources for evaluating school leadership and staff, including rubric/performance metrics
- Board resources for self-reflection and professional growth
- Board development plan
- Board interviews
- Staff roster, job descriptions, staff handbook, operations manual
- School calendar
- Professional development plan for leadership staff
- School leadership and staff interviews

2b. School Climate and Community Engagement

Schools with a sustaining school climate and engaged parent and community support have many of the characteristics below:

- Create and maintain a healthy professional school climate that is collaborative, student centered, and aligned with school mission and values
- Implement flexible, data-driven approach to professional development for all staff
- Encourage professional conversations about effective performance and quality instruction among staff, through, for example, such means as regular and periodic teaming (grade level teams, data days, etc.) and peer observations
- Have systems in place to evaluate professional development effectiveness and provide ongoing support for school-wide and individual initiatives
- Employ an effective means of measuring and monitoring core constituency satisfaction (parent, staff, and, when age appropriate, student), including, but not limited to, the DOE School Survey
- Have effective home-school communication practices and engagement strategies to ensure meaningful parent involvement in the learning of their children
- Engage parents actively in the life of the school, including advocacy, community engagement, and feedback on school policies and initiatives
- Develop strong community-based partnerships who support and advocate for the school

- Have a clear procedure for parents and staff to express concerns to school leadership and the Board, as appropriate, including a clearly articulated escalation path to authorizer

Evidence for school climate and community engagement may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- DOE School Survey satisfaction parent, teacher, and, if appropriate student results
- Internal satisfaction surveys
- Staff handbook
- Student retention and wait list data
- Staff retention data
- School Professional Development Plan and staff feedback on professional development events
- Resources for evaluations and observations, scheduled opportunities for professional collaboration, staff feedback on professional development events
- Leadership, staff, parent, student interviews
- Student and staff attendance rates
- Parent/Student Handbook
- Parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences
- Parent association meeting calendar and minutes
- Community partnerships and sponsored programs
- Parent and community feedback via public hearings, renewal calls to parents, etc.
- Community outreach documents (newsletters, announcements, invitations, etc.)

2c. Financial and Operational Health

Schools that are responsible stewards of public funds and effective, sustaining organizations have many of the characteristics below:

- Consistently meet student enrollment and retention targets
- Maintain annual budgets that meet all short- and long-term financial responsibilities with available revenues
- Provide rigorous oversight of financial and operational responsibilities, as school leadership and Board levels, in a manner that keeps the school's mission and academic goals central to short- and long-term decision-making
- Have clearly established policies and procedures for overall fiscal and operational health of the school (onboarding of all new staff, record-keeping, processing requests of HR services, application and enrollment calls, visitors, volunteers, etc.)
- Maintain effective internal controls of finances to ensure integrity of financial management and a proactive approach to mitigating risk
- Receive consistently clean financial audits
- If applicable, have strong, accountable partnerships with management organizations and other partners and significant vendors to support delivery of charter school design and academic program
- Ensure a safe, clean and appropriately resourced educational facility with all appropriate services specified in charter and mandated by appropriate law and regulations
- Have appropriate insurance coverage

Evidence for a financially sound, viable organization may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- School budget, P&Ls, and monthly/quarterly cash-flow reports
- Financial leader(s) job description, resume and accountability documents
- Financial and operational organizational chart
- Financial audits
- Contracts or Memos of Understanding (MOUs) for significant partnerships and vendor relationships
- Operational policies and procedures, including training resources
- Staff turnover and retention records
- Secure storage areas for student and staff records
- Policies/protocols for maintaining secure records
- Required facility documents (lease, certificate of occupancy, fire and safety inspections, etc.)
- School safety plan
- Appropriate insurance documents

3. Is the School in Compliance with its Charter and All Applicable Law and Regulations?

3a. Approved Charter and Agreement

Schools in substantial compliance with their charter and agreement have:

- Implemented the key features of their charter as described in the original charter and, if appropriate, as modified in approved revisions to their charter, including but not limited to mission, academic program, school organization, grade configuration, enrollment, goals, etc.
- Ensure that up-to-date charter is available on request to staff, parents, and school community
- Implemented comprehensive academic, behavioral, oversight, management, and operational policies and procedures that are substantially aligned with the charter and the school's stated mission and vision

Evidence for a school's compliance with the terms of its charter and charter agreement may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Authorized charter and signed agreement
- Charter revision request approval and documentation
- School mission
- School policies and procedures
- Annual Site Visit reports
- Board meetings, agendas and minutes
- Leadership, Board, staff and community interviews
- Public hearings (renewal or material revision hearings)

3b. Applicable Federal and State Law

Schools in substantial compliance with federal and state law:

- Meet all legal requirements for Title I and IDEA regulations and reporting

- Meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for FRL, ELL and Special Education students to those of their district of location¹⁰ or are making documented good faith efforts to reach comparable percentages for enrollment and retention
- Implement school policies related to student discipline and promotion and retention that are fully compliant with laws and regulations related to students with disabilities and due process regulations
- Conduct an independently verified fair and open lottery and manage with integrity enrollment process and annual waiting lists
- Employ instructional staff with appropriate security clearances and certification requirements

Evidence for compliance with applicable federal and state law may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- School reporting documents
- School's Annual Report
- Student recruitment plan and resources
- Student management policies and promotion and retention policies
- Family/Student handbook
- Student discipline records
- Parent complaint/grievance records
- Lottery policy, resources, and records; enrollment procedures and records
- Demographic data (school, district, and other as appropriate)
- Staff roster, fingerprint clearance for all staff, certification status of all instructional staff

3c. Applicable Regulations

Schools in substantial compliance with applicable regulations have:

- Safe and secure facilities with no significant compliance concerns with applicable regulations
- Consistently clean annual audits, up-to-date escrow accounts, and have completed all other financial reporting as required
- Boards that meet requirements for size, meeting frequency, public notice, applicable open-meeting and conflict of interest regulations, as well as complying with NYC DOE CSAS's requirements for reporting changes in board membership and securing approval for new board members.
- Informed NYC DOE CSAS, and where required, received CSAS approval for changes in significant partnerships, such as dropping/replacing a management organization
- Effectively engaged parent associations

Evidence for compliance with applicable regulations may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- School or building safety plan; appropriate inspection documents
- Annual audits, escrow accounts, other financial reporting documents
- Board roster, calendar, agenda and minutes, conflict of interest documents, notification of changes/approval of new member request documents
- Charter revision requests, revised or new contracts
- Parent association calendar of meetings, identified officers, parent association agenda and minutes, parent satisfaction survey results
- Interviews with Board, staff, parents, students or others, as appropriate

¹⁰ School-specific targets for enrollment and retention are to come from NY State Education Department

4. What Are the School's Plans for its Next Charter Term?

4a. School Expansion or Model Replication

In anticipation of a new charter term schools may be considering various growth options: replication, expansion to new grades or increased enrollment or altering their model in some significant way. Successful schools generally have processes for:

- Conducting needs/opportunity assessments
- Forming Board and leadership committees or subcommittees to investigate options, develop action plans, ensure capacity and resources are aligned, etc.
- Engaging school community in articulating charter revisions (or a new charter in cases of replication) to address the proposed growth plans
- Ensuring that the final proposal is ambitious but realistic in its plans
- Creating a well-reasoned and documented prospective for the school's new charter term and, if applicable, a new charter proposal (for replication)

Evidence for likely success in planning for school growth in a new charter term may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Renewal application narrative, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Renewal application revised charter submission, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- Charter (replication) Application
- Leadership and Board interviews

4b. Organizational Sustainability

Successful schools consistently perform despite change. While there is no single path for ensuring sustainability, successful schools often have the following features:

- School anticipates organizational opportunities/needs and plans for resource development (human resource policies for growing your own talent, for example, or fundraising or budget management to take care of anticipated capital needs and to mitigate risks for the unexpected, or board development to bring new talent or specific needs-based expertise to the school)

Evidence for organizational sustainability may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Renewal application narrative, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Renewal application revised charter submission, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- Board roster and resumes
- Board committees and minutes
- School organization chart
- Staff rosters
- Staff handbook
- Leadership and staff interviews
- Budget

4c. School or Model Improvements

Successful schools are thoughtful about the continued appropriateness of school design features and elements of their models. They:

- Review performance carefully and even if they don't make major changes through expansion or replication, they are careful to adjust elements to ensure continued and improved success.
- Develop plans to improve the school learning environment, including improving their facilities to expand program offerings and/or developing new partnerships to further the school's mission.

Evidence for successful improvements to a school's program or model may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Renewal application narrative, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Renewal application revised charter submission, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- Leadership and board interviews
- Contracts or Memos of Understanding (MOUs) with partners or important vendors